



# *Government Programs of Technical Assistance and Mission Boards*

by WALTER W. VAN KIRK, 1991 -

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TECHNICAL assistance to promote the well-being of peoples in the so-called underdeveloped areas is a new and exciting adventure in international relations. It is an adventure that offers great promise for the peace of mankind. In this hour, when frustration is the common lot of millions and many are in despair lest a global war ravage the earth, it is heartening to know that efforts are under way in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to ensure social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The churches of Christ, with the world as their parish, rejoice in this humanitarian endeavor. And well they might. Far more than half the population of the world lives in the underdeveloped areas where life expectancy is less than thirty years; the annual per capita income is less than a hundred dollars; and seventy-eight per cent of the people are unable to read or write. How can it be expected that the kingdom of God will flourish under such conditions? The Christian community can be hardly more than a beachhead in a world where hunger, poverty, ignorance, and disease play havoc with the morale of more than half the human race.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

When the United Nations launched its technical assistance program and President Truman enunciated his Point Four program, designed to make the benefits of the scientific advances and industrial progress of the United States available for the improvement and growth of the underdeveloped areas, the churches were quick to respond with affirmations of praise and thanksgiving. Such a reaction was to be expected. The missionaries of the cross of Christ had been among the pioneers of the gospel of mutual aid. It was the missionaries who in lands afar off had proclaimed the gospel of human rights, who had carried the torch of freedom and social justice into the dark places of the earth, who had lifted the sights of the people among whom they dwelt to higher levels of hope and aspiration. For many decades the missionaries had been building schools and hospitals, combating illiteracy, and changing for the better the subhuman standards of living of those to whom they ministered. Within

more recent years these evangels of our Risen Lord have included agricultural missionaries who have sought to increase the yield of the good earth and to multiply the fruits of the harvest.

Technical assistance, therefore, was construed by the churches as the extension by government of an operation to which they had long been committed and for the consummation of which they had invested both life and material treasure. Here was a proposal comparatively new to government but one long cherished by those Christians whose ministry of good works had contributed to the well-being of the underprivileged and the downtrodden.

Technical assistance programs are related in many minds to the ideological struggle between the democracies and the dictatorships, the regimented and the free societies. By others, these programs are regarded as a method of containing the threatened domination of Asia and Africa by the Communists. For Christians, however, technical assistance has merits deriving from the New Testament gospel of the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak. They are concerned, therefore, lest aid to the underdeveloped areas be corrupted by considerations of military strategy.

It must be recognized that within the past several years the international situation has worsened. The Soviet Union continues its aggression against nations large and small. The United States and other Western powers have embarked upon a vast rearmament program. Military expenditures have reached unprecedented heights. The foreign aid program of the United States has shifted, in the main, from economic aid to military aid. The Mutual Security Act of 1951 provides more than 5.7 billion dollars for direct military aid and 1.4 billion dollars for economic assistance designed to bolster the military strength of the receiving countries. By contrast, only 150 million dollars was appropriated for technical assistance, as such. And even here technical assistance is designed to fulfill the purpose embodied in the enabling legislation, which purpose is "to strengthen the mutual security and individual and collective defenses of the free world, to develop their resources in the interest of their security and independence and the national interest of the United States, and to facilitate the effec-

tive participation of those countries in the United Nations system for collective security." For weal or for woe the Point Four program has become, in part, an instrument in the waging of a cold war.

## WHAT SHOULD BE THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY'S RELATIONSHIP

What, then, shall the churches do? How can, or should, the Christian community be related to programs of technical assistance? The answer to these questions falls into two parts: *first*, the action of the churches in relation to government; and *second*, the behavior of the churches in their own life and work.

### I. *In Relation to Government*

In relation to government there are six things the churches can do:

1. *They can strive to recapture the high aims of the Point Four program envisaged by President Truman in his 1949 Inaugural Address and to maintain the high idealism embodied in the United Nations program of technical aid.* They can do this in the knowledge that the Communists are not primarily responsible for the uprising in Asia and Africa against economic bondage.

There comes a time in the history of humans when aspirations for larger living, long suppressed, become articulate and overpowering; when the concept of divine justice, however dimly conceived, leavens the imagination and behavior of God's people everywhere; when the barriers to the fulfillment of man's higher destiny are broken down either by peaceful processes or by revolutionary violence. Such a time has come for the peoples of Asia and Africa. The Communists did not open the eyes of these people. The Communists did not set these people marching. It is the spirit of the living and eternal God that has engendered among these people the hope of social and economic justice. Nor are the masses of the underdeveloped areas in revolt against the West. They are in revolt against the tyranny of poverty, famine, disease, and deprivation. They do not believe it was intended that they should forever walk in rags along the dead-end road of frustration. They know that just beyond their reach there is a field ripe unto the har-

vest and a way of life that under God was meant for them but which is not theirs.

Technical assistance, however, is only a part of their total concern. They are passionately in pursuit of a way of life that will invest the individual with a sense of human dignity. They don't want to be pushed around as pawns in the game of power politics. They don't want to be thought of as expendables in wars, either hot or cold. If among them the impression should prevail that fertilizers, seed grain, improved methods of agriculture, and irrigation and power projects are primarily designed to enlist them as participants in a possible world war, they are likely to turn thumbs down on technical assistance.

Already from Iran comes word that that country will refuse to sign the Point Four economic aid pact because of a clause committing Iran to help in the military defense of the West.

To be sure, these people want more bread, more rice, and more of such essentials to subsistence as clothing and shelter. But they want more than that. Much more. They want to be wanted. They don't want to be regarded as objects of pity, or as recipients of charity, or as so much clay to be molded by the political craftsmen of empire. They want to be regarded as persons equal in dignity and self-respect with all other persons.

It is the duty of the churches, therefore, to say to government that, if and when technical assistance is shifted from its original purpose of humanitarian aid to that of military strategy and cold war tactics, it is risking the goodwill and friendship of the very people for whom this program was initiated. The churches must see to it that the "bold new program" of technical assistance is not wholly laid aside in the effort to rearm the West. It would be a catastrophe if the people and government of the United States were to become so preoccupied with building their military defenses that they lost sight of the prior need of attacking the hunger, poverty, and social maladjustments upon which communism thrives. The deprived peoples of the earth, their imagination kindled by the stories of the fabulous riches of the West, must be strongly tempted to turn toward Moscow as they see these riches converted into the tools of war.



What shall it profit us if we pile gun upon gun and bomb upon bomb only to discover that the peace is lost because those who are strong refused to help bear the burdens of those who are weak. It could be that seed grain and improved agricultural tools for India would do more to bridge the chasm between East and West than a hundred jet planes or a thousand tanks. It could be that technical assistance on a global scale, unrelated to defense preparations, would weigh heavier in the scales of history than a hundred warships. It could be that the open hand of Samaritan friendship extended across the seas would win more friends and influence more people than the explosion of bombs on the proving grounds of the Atomic Energy Commission. Such is the word that must now be spoken by the churches if they would be faithful to their trust.

2. *It would vastly add to the moral effectiveness of projects of technical assistance if the churches and mission boards made available to their respective governments and, whenever possible, to the appropriate organs of the United Nations their knowledge and experience to the end that Point Four and similar programs may be, in fact, adventures in creative goodwill.* The churches should assist government in recruiting from among their members those who possess the skills and the aptitudes required for service in such endeavors. There ought to be frequent consultations on broad questions of policy between religious leaders and the directors and subordinate officials of technical assistance administrations. Returned missionaries could be extremely helpful in orientation courses designed to familiarize technical experts with the psychology, culture, and ways of life of the people to whose lands they go.

Whatever is done by the churches or the mission boards in these and in other ways should be done without financial grants of any kind, direct or indirect, from government. The Younger Churches on the field should be left free to determine for themselves what their relation is to be, financial or otherwise, to technical assistance programs. But for ourselves it seems crystal clear that our churches and our missionaries abroad should neither receive sub-

sidies nor grants nor financial remuneration in any form from government. Those who proclaim the gospel of Christ, whether from a pulpit or a rural training center or a health clinic or a classroom, are the more likely to enrich the lives of those to whom they minister if they keep their fingers out of the government treasury.

Already, in Asia and Africa, there are those who say that Western Christendom is only an ecclesiastical front for Western imperialism. It is not difficult to foresee what damage would be done the Christian enterprise if missionaries or church workers from the West were shown to be on the payroll of government. This would be a luscious tidbit of gossip for those Communists who are constantly seeking to discredit Christianity. Such assistance as can be rendered programs of technical assistance by our churches and mission boards must be a labor of love untarnished by government grants.

3. *The churches and mission boards in the United States should be ever energetic in their support of appropriations by Congress for programs of technical assistance.* There is a growing disposition in Washington to disparage the policy of economic aid. As expenditures for military purposes mount higher and higher, the tendency will be to cut from the budget every possible item that is not directly related to the making of guns and atom bombs. This tendency must be resisted if in the effort to save its skin the United States does not lose its soul. It is of extreme importance, therefore, that Christians inform their government that they support and are prepared to pay in taxes whatever funds may be required to keep the Point Four program intact.

4. *Our churches and mission boards should support in every possible way the technical assistance program of the United Nations and of such specialized agencies as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization.* They should insist that, wherever possible, the Point Four program of the United States be related to the corresponding endeavors of these international agencies. We should do this if for no other reason than to make clear the fact that technical assistance is not a disguised form of Western impe-



rialism. Religious bodies, at home and abroad, should be kept constantly informed of the far-flung operations of the UN Technical Assistance Administration, which is so ably directed by one of the outstanding Christian leaders of Canada—Mr. Hugh Keenleyside.

There is not among Christians generally a sufficient knowledge of the heroic and epoch-making efforts of the UN to avert war through its creative action in the area of technical assistance. During 1951 more than 1,000 experts were sent to the far corners of the earth, and more than 1,000 persons from underdeveloped countries journeyed to the West for studies in technical centers. Agreements have been entered into between the UN and sixty-three governments. The fifty-two persons of officer grade in the UN Technical Assistance Administration represent seventeen nationalities. The fellowship and scholarship appointments represent international goodwill in the raw.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development made twenty-one loans totalling \$300,000,000 for development programs in eleven different countries.

The World Health Organization is providing technical services which help requesting governments control malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases which sap the strength and vitality of whole populations.

The Food and Agriculture Organization seeks to combat hunger and malnutrition. What is being done on this front of human need should be followed with eager interest by the Apostles of Him who fed the multitude by the Galilean Sea. The grim need of improving food production is seen in the fact that the race against hunger is being lost. The Director-General of FAO, Mr. Norris E. Dodd, is authority for the statement that since World War II world food production has increased only nine per cent, whereas the population of the world has increased twelve per cent. Before World War II there was enough food to give each man, woman, and child 2,380 calories, whereas the available food per capita today provides only 2,260 calories. And what is worse, today's food is not distributed as evenly as before the second world war. Those who in the past have been well-fed are fed better today

than ever before, whereas those who were hungry yesterday are hungrier today. The waste thrown into the garbage cans of Christian America would fill the empty stomachs of a considerable number of the undernourished in the far away places of the earth. Technical assistance that promises to feed the hungry is deserving of a more enlightened support by Christians of the West.

Mission boards particularly should make available to their personnel in every land a continuing information service setting forth the areas in which the UN is at work, the nature of the projects undertaken or in prospect, the governments participating in their operations, and the bearing of technical assistance upon human rights. If Christian bodies generally were to undergird the UN's economic development program with their moral support, their prayers, and their constant pressure on government to expand this program, they would be laying solid foundations for peace.

5. *The success of the Point Four program will depend in large measure upon the behavior of the United States in other areas of policy.* Our nation cannot put one hand to the plow of technical assistance while with the other hand it engages in operations that are inimical to the social and political well-being of the peoples in the underdeveloped areas.

It is precisely at this point that the mission boards in the United States must be on the alert lest the good that is accomplished by technical assistance is undone by policies in other directions. These boards and allied agencies have spoken their minds when immigration policies have offered insult to the nationals of those countries in which their missionaries are engaged. They have been helpful in matters related to slave labor and the international traffic in narcotics. They are occupied, and necessarily so, with the policies of government related to passports, visas, and the movement of missionaries from the United States to other lands. They have been and are enthusiastic supporters of the Point Four program. It may be doubted, however, if our mission boards have been sufficiently concerned with the overall foreign policies of government.

It is certain that the people in the underdevel-

oped areas will interpret the Point Four program in relation to American behavior in other respects. They know that at the 1951 General Assembly of the United Nations, the United States abstained on the question of inviting representatives of the Herero tribes to appear at Paris to voice their grievances against the Union of South Africa. They know that the United States has not yet ratified the Convention on the Crime and Punishment of Genocide. They know that the United States is building ever higher walls of restrictive immigration and naturalization statutes.

What are our missionary societies saying about these and kindred aspects of American policy? Too little. Surely they do not believe that Point Four can be implemented in a political vacuum? The time has come when mission boards and agencies must exert a continuing and corrective influence on the shaping of those policies of government that affect the political and social status of subject and dependent peoples.

6. *Our churches everywhere must see the connection between technical assistance and land reform.* We come here to one of the most urgent needs of depressed peoples. Three-quarters of the world's entire population depend upon the land for their livelihood. In many areas small farmers, sharecroppers, tenants, and farm laborers are barely existing under systems of land tenure that deny justice and obstruct efforts toward agrarian reform.

In a recent report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council it was pointed out that in far too many instances interest rates paid by those who work the land range from twenty per cent to one hundred per cent a year. Rental charges often range up to seventy-five to eighty per cent of the annual crops. The misery and suffering endured by these dispossessed masses provide grist for the mills of the Communist propagandist. The United Nations is attacking this problem, not with the thought that a solution is near at hand but with a view to stirring the international community to do something about land reforms.

Also, when the United Nations undertakes to promote full employment and higher standards of living, it is engaging in an operation that will slow

down and may ultimately stop the tide of Communist aggression. It is a pity that so few of the people of our churches are familiar with what is being done along these and collateral lines. If our churches and missionary agencies really desire to see technical assistance programs achieve the high purposes for which they were projected, they will insist that these endeavors be related to land reform, employment, and standards of living.

## II. *In Relation to Churches' Life and Work*

We come now to the question of what the churches can do in their own life and work to further the aims envisaged in programs of technical assistance.

1. *Missionaries on the field can be useful in familiarizing technical assistance personnel in matters pertaining to social behavior.* Political functionaries are too often lacking in a knowledge of how to behave when they are far away from home. They are inclined to forget that what they are is no less important than what they do and that their manner of living is an open book the pages of which are avidly read by the dispossessed multitudes, who are unfamiliar with the customs and the social whirl of the West.

Thus it happens that an appointee of government may have industrial know-how but he may be clumsy and ill-informed regarding the things of the spirit. A technician who wears overalls while at work among the villagers and returns by limousine to his big city hotel where he dons a tuxedo for dinner and sips cocktails is not likely to make friends either for himself or for the West. And the wives of technicians who accompany their husbands to the underdeveloped areas might be encouraged to put their mink coats and evening dresses in mothballs. There ought to be a beaten path from the home of the missionary to the domicile of the technician for such an exchange of views as will invest the processes of technical assistance with spiritual content and cultural understanding.

2. *The missionaries themselves can and should spend more time living among the people of the villages, sharing in their poverty, and identifying themselves with the need, the hunger, and the sorrow of*

*God's children everywhere.* Communists are very skillful in their strategy of infiltration. They are not content with propaganda by remote control. Neither was Jesus. His was not an institutional ministry. He lived among the people. Their poverty was his poverty. Their sorrows were his sorrows. If the people had nowhere to lay their heads, neither did he. By identifying themselves with the people of the villages, missionaries and leaders of the Younger Churches will be in a position to develop self-help programs of their own, programs that might well shape the pilot projects of government.

Asia and Africa will never be won for the West nor will they be influenced to abandon the violence of revolution by attractively-engraved brochures on the blessings of democracy. Nor can these people be won for Christ by the humming of mimeograph machines operated by missionary executives in urban-centered institutions. Neither technical assistance programs nor missionary projects that are unrelated to the day-to-day concerns of the masses who live on the land will suffice. It is extremely difficult for those accustomed to Western standards of living to accommodate themselves to the patterns of living of depressed peoples. But who will deny that the way to influence people is by living with them, working with them, suffering and dying with them?

3. *The missionaries and the leaders of the Younger Churches on the field can and should be in frequent on-the-spot consultation with the officials of United States and United Nations agencies of technical assistance, making available to such officials the experience of mission-operated programs and discussing with them the basic principles of policy which affect human rights.* Technical assistance apart from human rights will hold little attraction for the peoples of the underdeveloped areas. It is here that the witness of the churches can be extremely helpful.

To sink a steel plow into the earth where once only sticks and wooden plows were used is an exciting thing to do. Still more exciting, and more rewarding, is the proclamation and the practice of the gospel of human rights. And who is better equipped than the missionary or the Christian na-



tionals of the underdeveloped countries to insist that economic development be accompanied by the extension and safeguarding of human rights?

4. *The churches will give impetus to technical assistance if they will reshape the strategy of their world mission in accordance with the social and economic requirements of the new era upon which the masses of Asia and Africa have embarked.* It is gratifying to know that church leaders and missionary executives have this matter under constant study. The task with which they are confronted is an enormous one. Few will deny that the strategy of missions even to this day adheres too closely to the patterns fixed by the perspective of fifty or a hundred years ago. That strategy was related, in the main, to urban areas and to an institutional ministry: schools, colleges, theological seminaries, hospitals, and the like. That was a glorious and creative ministry and one concerning which Christendom may well be proud.

But conditions have changed. The pendulum of history has swung away from urban centers toward the village and the countryside. It is here where the masses live. It is here the upsurge of peoples for social justice has engendered a revolutionary fanaticism. It is here human needs are most urgent and the whisperings of the Communists are pouring in upon the ears of the dispossessed.

Missionary agencies cannot, of course, abandon their institutional ministry. The need for this ministry is as great today as it was when in China, Japan, India, and elsewhere the cornerstones of schools and hospitals were laid to the accompaniment of glad hosannas and prayers of thanksgiving.

But the ministry of missions must now be expanded to include a full-scale operation on the rural front. Not that rural missions have been neglected. They haven't been. The national Christian councils of many countries have rural church departments. Four Christian colleges of agriculture have been established in distant lands. There are hundreds of rural missionaries whose labors are not directly related to agricultural projects but whose contacts are with village people. In 1946 Agricultural Missions, Inc., sponsored a survey among the rural peoples of India and other Asiatic lands. The

concern which motivated this survey was the responsibility of the Christian enterprise for agrarian reform and rehabilitation.

The time has come for missions to broaden the scope of their activities among the village and country folk of the underdeveloped areas. The need for this is seen in the fact that of the 15,000 American missionaries in the field there are only eighty-five technically-trained agricultural missionaries. This number must be vastly increased, and the churches and mission boards must exhibit a more imaginative daring in their plans to exalt the name of Christ among the landless peasants and farm laborers of the good earth. This they cannot do until the entire Christian community embraces with greater fervor its missionary obligation. This is not to deny that millions of Christians in Western lands have constantly on their hearts and minds the world mission of the Church. In many communions missionary giving is steadily rising. This is heartening.

Disheartening is the fact that Western Christendom in its entirety does not exhibit the characteristics of a movement that is global in outreach and revolutionary in spirit and purpose. It is so easy for Christians to support government and United Nations projects for economic development. It is so difficult for these same Christians to understand that theirs is a task of world reconstruction on the spiritual level, a task that cannot and will not be accomplished unless they give more substantially of themselves and of their means that the name of Christ may be carried to peoples afar off. By contrast with the gifts laid upon our altars for our own spiritual enrichment, the contributions forthcoming for the world mission of the Church are pitifully small.

The fact of the matter is that a considerable section of Western Christendom is going isolationist at the precise moment when secular and atheistic forces are making their strongest bid for the allegiance of the millions of Asia and Africa. With empires toppling, with races and peoples caught in the ferment of a revolutionary dynamism of unprecedented power, with multitudes glimpsing for the first time a future of cultural equality and of social economic justice, and with slogans of dictators and demagogues filling the ether waves, too many

Christians of the West go blithely on their way building new churches, buying new pipe organs and plush-covered pews, holding fast to the fleshpots of their own ecclesiastical comforts, and appropriating for themselves the material treasures that even now should be invested in giving spiritual direction to those forces that are shaping the destiny of this and future generations.

### THEY WANT LIFE

For the United States and the Western nations to talk about democracy, freedom, liberty, and justice in abstract principles is to talk a language which peoples in the underdeveloped areas do not understand. For Christians to preach in abstract theological terms about Him who is the Bread of Life is to preach a gospel that has little meaning for those who can neither read nor write and for whom bread, or its equivalent, is a luxury beyond their reach. What these people can understand is an irrigation system that brings water to their parched lands, making green the desolate places of their habitation. What these people can understand is a gospel translated into deeds of loving kindness, deeds that will make of their barren lands a place where is heard the song of the harvest.

The masses of Asia are not choosing among communism, democracy, and socialism. They want life. They want food for themselves and their children. They want raiment and shelter. When they have these things and when they are treated as equals in human dignity and worth, they will create a civilization of their own—one that may be more rewarding than any the world has yet seen.